Beware! Static Electricity Can Cause Gas Pump Fires!

Static electricity is a big problem in the winter months. Can it cause a fire in your car's gas tank while you are refueling? The Petroleum Equipment Institute recently launched a campaign to increase awareness of gas pump fires resulting from static electricity.

To date, over 150 refueling fires have been documented that appear to be caused by a discharge of static electricity. The explosions are the result of static electricity between touching the fuel pump nozzle or vehicle's fuel cap and fuel vapors, causing a spark.

Several factors with static electricity are:

1) Entering or exiting a vehicle and sliding across the vehicle's seat surface can generate static electricity much like walking across a carpet.

2) Weather conditions, such as cold and dry winds, may cause static electrical buildups while both the vehicle and person are just standing still.

3) The flow of any fluid, including water, across a metal surface can cause can result in static electricity.

4) Wearing rubber soled shoes can insulate the person pumping fuel but not eliminate the static charge into the ground.

Another risk factor to consider is the likelihood of children strapped into car seats while the vehicle is at the filling station.

Always be prepared for the unexpected. Look around at the service station for fire extinguishers and emergency fuel cut-off switches, which are normally located near the door into the service station.

The Petroleum Equipment Institute and other companies have posted safety related information regarding this issue at http://www.pei.org. Once there, click in the center of the screen on the "Stop Static" icon.